

**Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Capella House School Governing Board,
held on 27 September 2023 at 6.00pm virtually via Teams.**

Members of the Local Governing Board (LGB) in attendance virtually: Niale Cleobury (from Item 1-6, Michele Coleman (from Item 2), Kerri Morgan, Kate Nepstad, Dominic Sunderland (Headteacher) and Andrew Whiteside (Chair).

Members of the Local Governing Board (LGB) absent: Peter Bailey, Maria Landeira Frias, Simon Gordon, Julia Morley, and Claire Richmond.

Clerk in attendance virtually: Julie Adams

1. Welcome, apologies, declarations of interest and items from the Clerk.

1.A. The Governing Board **noted** apologies had been received from Peter Bailey, Maria Landeira Frias, Simon Gordon, Julia Morley, and Claire Richmond. The Governing Board **agreed** to consent to their absences.

ACTION: The Chair of Trustees **agreed** to contact **Simon Gordon** to check his availability.

The Governing Board **noted** that the Scheme of Delegation had been amended to make it clear that to be quorate meeting must contain half of the filled positions on the governing board, and therefore the meeting was quorate.

The Governing Board **noted** from the papers that Kerri Morgan had secured a position within the Trust Central Team, and this would be her final meeting as a staff governor. The Governing Board **thanked** Kerri for her input and hoped her new role would allow her an opportunity to remain in contact with governors.

1.B. The Chair of the Governing Board **reminded** governors that all members of the LGB must abide by the Auriga Academy Trust Declarations of Interest Policy and should also declare if they have an interest in any matter that comes before the LGB.

ACTION: All governors must **review** and **confirm** completion of the Declarations of Interest and Confirmations on GovernorHub by the end of October 2023.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair and Link Governors

2.A. The Governing Body were **reminded** that the appointments of Chair and Co-Vice Chairs had been agreed at the previous meeting. Andy Whiteside was appointed as Chair and Kate Nepstad and Simon Gordon were appointed as Co-Vice Chairs from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024.

2.B. The Governing Body **noted** that Simon Gordon would continue as Finance Link Governor and that Kate Nepstad and Niale Cleobury would continue as Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Link Governors.

3. Minutes of the previous Governing Board meeting

3.A. The Governing Board **noted** the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 are not available and will be presented to the next meeting for approval.

3.B. The Governing Board **agreed** that the demonstration for governors of Earwig (the school's assessment tool) should be arranged for this academic year.

ACTION: The Headteacher would arrange dates for the demonstration of the Earwig assessment tool.

There were no other matters that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3.C. The Governing Board **reviewed** the first draft of the report. They **discussed** different approaches to the content of the report used in other schools. The Governing Board **agreed** that the report should be short, possibly two pages, focussing on the visits and how they linked to school development activities.

The Governing Board **asked** if the School Development Plan is published on the school's website. The Headteacher **confirmed** that as a live working document and that it would be inappropriate to publish in full.

ACTION: The Headteacher **agreed** to publish on the school website the headline Development plan areas.

ACTION: The Chair of Governing Board **agreed** to take on comments and recirculate a draft for approval by email, and subsequent publication on the website.

The Governance Professional **advised** that a clarification to the Scheme of Delegation had been agreed at the last Board of Trustees meeting to publish all minutes of Board and LGB meetings. Although a timeframe had not been set for this, it would happen this academic year.

The Governing Board **expressed concern** that this could invite difficult questions to the LGB. There was general agreement that as the LGB was a public body, they should be demonstrating transparency. Concerns were also expressed that there was not sufficient capacity to ensure that the minutes were kept up to date on the website as this could create a poor impression publicly if they were not.

ACTION: The Chair of Governing Board agreed that he would relate the LGB's concerns about the publication of minutes to the Board via his summary report and at the Chair and Vice Chairs meeting.

3.D. The Governing Board **received** the draft Governance Development Plan for 2023-24. Kate Nepstad, Safeguarding Link Governor, **noted** that the requirement to complete Level 2 training for Safeguarding Link governors, should be removed as this had also been removed from the Trust Terms of Reference.

The Governing Board **agreed** the Governance Development Plan would evolve over the course of the year and that the Chair and Vice-Chairs will be responsible for driving it forward.

The Governing Board **approved** the Governance Development Plan for 2023-24.

4. References from the Board of Trustees

The Governing Board **received** and **noted** the changes to the Scheme of Delegation, Code of Conduct, Terms of Reference, Agenda Plans and Operational Procedures agreed at the Board of Trustees meeting on 12 September 2023. The Governance Professional **explained** that the main changes were to separate out into three documents - the Scheme of Delegation, Terms of Reference, and agenda plans. Most other changes to the documents were either to clarify some inconsistencies in the documents, (i.e., one third vs one half quoracy), to reflect what had become current practice (i.e., timings of Elections for Chairs / Vice Chairs) or to identify areas of omission (i.e., specifying process for filling parent and staff governor vacancies where there were no applications).

The Governing Board **acknowledged** the changes and their concerns had been raised earlier in the meeting.

5. Link Governor and other Governor Visit Reports

5.A. The Governing Board **received** the report from the Safeguarding Link Governor, Kate Nepstad, who visited the Primary site. This had been a follow up visit to the one that Niala Cleobury (Deputy Safeguarding Link Governor) had undertaken in the summer term. She **explained** that she had been reassured that staff training reflecting the changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and reporting of low-level concerns had taken place; that follow up training was planned; that CPOMS was being used effectively and areas highlighted on the Safeguarding Audit were being addressed. Her visit had raised two questions regarding the Childcare Disqualification and S128 checks that she would raise. The Governance Professional advised that S128 Checks are undertaken on all Governors Trustees and Senior Leaders and that Anita Lockie, the Trust Head of HR (Human Resources), would be the best person to contact regarding the other query.

ACTION: The Safeguarding Link Governor to query if the Trust was compliant on the Childcare Disqualification with the Auriga Trust Head of HR.

The Headteacher **confirmed** that all 'Red' flagged issues on the Safeguarding Audit had been actioned, as had the majority of the 'amber' good practice suggestions had also been addressed.

5.B. The Governing Board **discussed** their attendance at some of the end of term activities including Macbeth and Sports Day. Macbeth was described by governors as an 'exceptional event,' which demonstrated the strength of the school community, engagement of the parents, the breadth of the curriculum including production and acting, and the confidence of the young people involved.

The Chair of the Governing Board **attended** the Sports Day with Simon Gordon (morning only). He had been extremely impressed with how the secondary learners, helped and supported the primary learners. He also **commented** on the atmosphere of the event which reflected and celebrated participation. He also had a virtual meeting with the Headteacher in advance of the LGB.

The Governing Board **agreed** to discuss the programme of visits for 2023-24 to align with the discussion of the School Development Plan in Item 6.

6. Headteacher report

- 6.A. Key risks
- 6.B. Behaviour and Attendance
- 6.C. Safeguarding (inc. Lead Governor Report from 5.1 and CPOMS report)
- 6.D. Pupil Performance – destinations, extra-curricular provision, attendance
- 6.E. Update on School Self Evaluation and School Development Plan and **agree** programme for governor monitoring and priorities)
- 6.F. Learner, family & community voice (including staff, parent, and primary students' surveys)
- 6.G. HR Commentary
- 6.H. Finance Commentary (inc. Lead Governor Report from 5.1)

The Governing Board **received** a report from the Headteacher covering the above areas. The Headteacher **advised** that the return to school for him had been pleasing, in that the Assistant Headteachers for Primary and Secondary had carried on with 'business as usual' during his absence. The first week back had been focussed and intense. The Headteacher felt that on both sites, staff and pupils have returned extremely positively. Staff governors **reflected** that the Headteacher had been missed and concurred that there was an extremely positive energy in the school.

Two areas which the Headteacher wished to **highlight** to the Governing Board were behaviour and attendance. Many of the students whose previous year's attendance had not been as high as staff would have liked, have been in every day so far. The Headteacher **reported** that while there are still behaviour instances occurring in school, there is a noticeable difference in the consistency of the recording of them (i.e., more factual and less emotive). He also advised that staff are more pro-active in learning the triggers for each pupil and using strategies (social stories and complex conversations) to respond to those instances. He commented that this had been particularly evident since his return. The Headteacher requested that a visit specifically focussing on behaviour is arranged before the next meeting as there also has been some changes to the administration of Behaviour Support Plans.

ACTION: A governor visit to be undertaken with particular focus on behaviour in school before the next LGB meeting.

The Headteacher then invited questions from the Governing Board.

The Governing Board **asked** what actions the school had undertaken to address concerns in the parental survey around bullying. The Headteacher **explained** that there had been assemblies around online bullying at primary and other discussions about anti-bullying. He **advised** that he often has one to one conversation with parents to explain that full

circumstances of what is happening, and this generally ends in the parent being supportive of the actions from the school.

The Governing Board **reviewed** the pupil progress data and noted that whilst assessment is a useful tool it is a snapshot. The Headteacher **explained** that there is currently work being undertaken to determine an approach to reading assessment post-17, which has not been required before as there had not been pupils in that age group. A Test of Written Language (TOWL) assessment will be done twice a year to re-test reliability in this area, starting after half-term.

The Governing Board **questioned** the opportunity for stretch and challenge in both English and Maths for the 6 or 7 pupils that have reached that level. The Headteacher **explained** that there are things in place to ensure they remain engaged. They may start a book club which will demonstrate reading beyond the curriculum, using book reviews or reciprocal reading where they work with others, perhaps with less ability and explain the ideas and tricky words. This would require a high-level understanding of the text (i.e., 13+). The Headteacher **explained** that both English and Maths departments are collaborating more to move pupils between ability levels more regularly. In some cases, it may be appropriate to consider what barriers pupils if undertaking a functional skills GCSE, but this must be balanced with their wellbeing, so it may be more appropriate to prepare them for doing this at college.

The Governing Board **asked** if the Headteacher had seen evidence that the school was progressing towards 'Good'. The Headteacher **reported** that he was finishing the first round of Learning Walks this term. He **advised** that because he had been absent in the summer term, it was more obvious to him that the staff have a deeper understanding of what 'good' teaching is. It is expected that the School Improvement Partner visit the school on 11 October 2023 will support this assessment.

The Governing Board **noted** there were spaces in pupil numbers in the primary provision. The Headteacher **advised** that this was offset by more pupils in the secondary school and overall, the school was growing. Twenty-five consultations had already been received for admission into Year 7 in September 2024 and there would also be some pupils who would be moving up from the Year 6 class. The Headteacher is considering expanding the Year 7 intake next year.

The Governing Board **discussed** recruitment and retention of staff. The Headteacher **reported** that one teacher had given notice last term, who should be leaving this term and a new agency teacher had started, making a positive impression. Both Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA's) and Teaching Assistants (TA) are keen to develop their career pathways, and this is being explored. The Headteacher is working with the Head of Finance, Becky Graham, to see if the teaching staffing budget can be redirected to support internal staff development.

ACTION: The Headteacher would report to the next meeting regarding the decisions made around developing staff internally.

The Governing Board **reflected** that their discussion so far reflected the SDP (School Development Priorities) areas well. They **questioned** if it was too much to have six areas and

suggested that by having safeguarding as a priority, it may be assumed there is a problem in that area. The Headteacher understood that it could be interpreted in this way, however, he felt that it was important that there was a clear focus on this area to ensure the school maintains its high standards with regards to safeguarding. The changes to the staffing, (Maria Landeria Frias becoming Designated Safeguarding Lead and Phillip Hall the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) could be viewed as a risk. The Headteacher **expected** progress on this SDP area to be rapid.

The Headteacher **reported** that the detail of the sixth SDP priority area relating to middle-leadership would be discussed with the School Improvement Partner during his October visit. The Headteacher may choose a different approach to this area following that meeting.

The Governing Board **agreed** to co-own the SDP with the school's leadership team and that they would arrange governor visits to support that activity. This was welcomed by the Headteacher as it worked well the previous year. The Governing Board provisionally **agreed** to monitoring as outlined below.

Priority 1: Ensure all teaching is consistently good or better and includes SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs) strategies and approaches across the whole curriculum – Michele Coleman and Peter Bailey

Priority 2: Ensure safeguarding standards and practice remain consistently high across the school – Kate Nepstad and Niale Cleobury

Priority 3: Focus and enhance the teaching of phonics and spelling, across both sites, to develop writing fluency and consistency – Niall Cleobury and Claire Richmond.

Priority 4: Further strengthen Key Stage 4 provision by including career readiness and external accreditation delivery – Claire Richmond and Julia Morley

Priority 5: Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum to ensure a consistent, whole-school approach to supporting pupils' mental health and well-being – Andrew Whiteside and Simon Gordon

Priority 6: Develop middle leadership skills amongst the staff – Michele Coleman and Andy Whiteside

ACTION: The Chair of Governors would circulate the proposed areas for monitoring and request that governors begin to arrange visits on Priorities 1, 2, 5 and 6 occur before the end of the Autumn Term.

The Governing Board **noted** that a fire drill had already taken place this term and asked if a lockdown drill would be planned. The Governing Board **acknowledged** the effect these types of drill may have on the pupil's wellbeing. The Headteacher **advised** that a lockdown had been required previously, senior leaders had communicated by radio and the Headteacher had ensured that all class teachers had been informed. He confirmed that pupils had been unaware of the drill as staff had maintained a calm and unchanged routine, as it may have proved very unsettling for pupils.

ACTION: The Headteacher will review the lockdown procedure with SLT (Senior Leadership Team) and arrange for an appropriate drill to be undertaken.

The Chair of the Governing Board **advised** that recruitment for a parent and staff governors would be undertaken in conjunction with the Governance Professional with a view to the vacancies being filled at the next LGB meeting. The Headteacher was keen that should staff

governors should be appointed on a rotational basis to reduce workload, improve their awareness of the work of the governing board and support their own professional development.

ACTION: The Chair of the Governing Board, the Governance Professional and the Headteacher to conduct the process of parent and staff elections.

The Governing Board **acknowledged** the feedback from the surveys and **asked** the Headteacher how he was anticipating using the information. The Headteacher **confirmed** that he would be creating a 'You said, we did' approach this year to provide feedback to stakeholders.

7. Approval of Policies / Statements

The Governing Board **noted** that this was based on the Model Safeguarding Policy approved by the Trust Board, which had been adapted to reflect the school's own context and setting, such as the shared spaces. The Governing Board **agreed** there were no material changes to the document to be made but **noted** some small errors which needed amending.

The Governing Board **approved** Capella House School Safeguarding Policy 2023-24.

8. Review of Impact, planned actions and feedback to the Board of Trustees

The Governing Board **reflected** that:

- it was good to see the Headteacher return to school, however, governors wanted to ensure that his return was gradual as had been planned.
- the evidence being provided to them gives some reassurances that the school continues to improve.
- feedback to the Board would need to ensure that there was adequate clerking support to ensure the timely publication of minutes etc.
- Plans have already been made for governor visits to monitor the implementation and progress of the School Development Plan

9. Confidentiality

The Governing Board **agreed** that the discussion at the meeting, the background papers, and any reports identified as confidential above, should remain confidential and be excluded from the published minutes and papers.

The Governing Board **noted** the date of the next meeting is 22 November 2023 and **requested** that the Chair and Governance Professional, look to vary these dates and times to ensure all governors could attend.

ACTION: The Governance Professional to review the dates and times of meetings and recirculate to Governors.


Andrew Whiteside (Aug 5, 2024 16:00 GMT+1)

Chair of Capella House School Local Governing Board

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Final Audit Report

2024-08-05

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